

THE SOUNDS OF LOVE AND GLOBAL TRANSFORMATION

FORTY YEARS OF REACHING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Conferences, seminaries, mission organizations and even degrees have been established around one idea: How do we reach the lost? Organizations, books, and church programs are geared to learn how we can best share the good news of the gospel, both here and abroad. For over 40 years, our commitment has been to just keep doing the next right thing, while working with international students whom God has brought to the San Diego area.

Our stories start here.

While we were both raised in Asia, God was already at work weaving in our hearts an expansive worldview. Our culture shaped us to see beyond race and religion. When studying in the United States as a college student, Wichit came to know Christ through campus missionaries. Miriam's faith and commitment to Christ had solidified while growing up as a missionary kid.

We didn't have money, seminary degrees or a mission statement, but what we did have was a love for God and for the lost. With limited resources and a wealth of love, we felt the call that God placed on our lives was to love international college students.

Love can be a huge word watered down to have little meaning. But for us, love is specific: It is a sound. Every Friday night for over 40 years in our little farmhouse on the top of a hill, our home has sounded like love: dishes clinging, pots simmering with curry, cymbals clanging, voices chattering (in English and every foreign language imaginable), pockets of laughter erupting and bare feet smacking against tile floors.

One sound you will never hear is a doorbell. On the rare occasion that the doorbell rings, people stop and exchange uneasy eye contact because it is such a

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Wichit and Miriam Maneevone have four daughters and eight grandchildren. They have served with ISI since 1974, reaching the international collegians in the San Diego area through "Lifestyle Discipleship." They started the original ICF (International Christian Fellowship) in May of 1983. Love, relationship, discipleship and empowering student leadership are keys to this "family-style" ministry. Most students from ICF return home, so nurturing returnees is significant to the vitality of ICF. Website: <http://wichitandmiriammaneevone.weebly.com>



Photo Credit: Melissa Vack

rarity. *Why would people ring a doorbell when they come home?* They don't. They walk right in. And that's what we have done to reach the lost. We have given them a home.

At first, our Friday evening Bible study grew to 100, so that over the years thousands of international students have been reached. It also grew into Sunday lunches after church and one-on-one discipleship between college classes. It grew into a church plant geared to train and equip international students to share the gospel when they return home. It grew to overseas ministries and new missionaries. It grew into countries with high concentrations of unreached people groups like Japan, other Pacific Rim countries,

India, Myanmar, Tibet, Thailand, Malaysia, China, pockets in the Middle East, Africa and Central and South America. For years, the majestic sounds of these students have echoed throughout our home, churches, cities and around the world until we have now touched well over 115 countries. The sound of *coming home* grew until it wrapped the world with the good news of the Gospel.

Consider these examples of international students transformed by Christ.

Students like Ivan, Jyap and Young Tak are among the many international students that found Christ while attending our home Bible study. Ivan was 16 years old from Singapore and studying to become a doctor



Photo Credit: Melissa Vaek

when he was invited to our home on a Friday night. This young, brilliant teenager made a commitment to Christ. Instead of pursuing medicine, he went on to get his doctorate in missions and returned to Singapore to serve as the mission pastor in a church there. Currently, he is transitioning to ministry in a “closed” country.

Jyap, a devoted Thai Buddhist, came to the States to learn English and get her Masters in Business Administration. Instead, Christ radically changed her life. After spending years in our home where she experienced real love, she returned to Thailand to serve the local church and missionaries.

Young Tak, a charismatic 19-year-old Korean, came to our home one day and eventually accepted Christ as his Savior. He left several years later to plant a church in China and in Los Angeles.

The stories are endless, and the lives changed are countless.

It's really not rocket science. It's simple. It's about Jesus. Reaching the lost for Christ means doing what Jesus did, meeting physical needs, crossing cultural boundaries, reaching into the hearts of all who came across His path and inviting them into a life far more rich and real and radiant than the one they were living.

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We invite international college students into our home where we feed, teach and tell them about Jesus.

Over the years, hundreds, if not thousands, of students have accepted Christ as their Savior and then returned home and shared their faith with family and friends. The gospel has spread like water in dry lands desperate for life.

These are students who already have passports, instant access into their home countries, speak the language and know the culture are leaders in their communities. They have already established relationships and have automatic influence to reach the lost in their home countries. Some of the work that takes foreign missionaries years to accomplish is instant for an international student returning home.

Is it easy? Yes and no. Christianity is a call to die. It is a call to lay down your life in order to find it. Have struggles and trials nearly halted our ministry? Yes. Is having people in your home, day in and day out, hard? Yes. Is following the story that God has written inside of you rewarding and entirely life changing? Absolutely! When you are following the call that Christ has on your life, you accept the hard with the good because that brings the most glory to God. Our call has always been to keep taking small steps of faith that are mighty big for the kingdom of God.

So even as we are into our seventies, the glorious sound of love echoes from our land perched high enough for us to see, not just the surrounding mountains, but eternity. 

